

In the Claims

1-12 (canceled).

13. (previously presented) A combination of a thermal preservation insert and a plastic food container, comprising:

a plastic food container including a bottom and a container wall, said container wall having a lower portion that meets the bottom,

a thermal preservation insert comprising:

a disk, the disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside the disk,

the disk having a lower surface that conforms to a shape of the bottom of the plastic food container; and having a side that conforms to a shape of the lower portion of the container wall of the plastic food container, the lower surface of the disk resting on the bottom of the plastic food container and the side of the disk resting snugly against the lower portion of the container wall thereby precluding food from penetrating between surfaces of the plastic food container and the disk, said disk not fastened to a part of the plastic container.

14. (original) The combination of claim 13, wherein the disk has a substantially flat upper surface.

15. (canceled)

16. (previously presented) The combination of claim 13, wherein the upper surface of the disk has a plastic tab jutting out.

17 through 20 (canceled).

21. (previously presented) A combination of a plastic food container with two thermal preservation inserts, comprising:

a plastic food container including a bottom and a sloping container wall, an interior space defined by said sloping container wall narrowing toward the bottom, said plastic food container having a lower portion that meets the bottom,

a first thermal preservation insert placed on the bottom of the plastic food container and comprising:

a disk, the disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside the disk,

the disk having a lower surface that conforms to a shape of the bottom of the plastic food container and having a side that conforms to the lower portion of the sloping container wall of the plastic food container, and

a second thermal preservation insert comprising a second disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside the second disk, a side of the second disk conforming to an intermediate portion of the sloping container wall of the plastic food container when the second thermal preservation insert rests on the intermediate portion of the sloping container wall of the plastic food container,

the lower surface of the disk resting on the bottom of the plastic food container and the

side of the disk resting snugly against the lower portion of the container wall thereby precluding food from penetrating between surfaces of the plastic food container and the disk, said disk not fastened to a part of the plastic container.

22. (original) The combination of claim 21, wherein the disk has a substantially flat upper surface.

23. (original) The combination of claim 22, wherein the upper surface of the disk is substantially smooth.

24. (previously presented) The combination of claim 21, wherein the upper surface of the disk has a plastic tab jutting out.

25 through 30 (canceled).

31. (withdrawn) A combination of a thermal preservation insert and a plastic food container, comprising:

a multi-compartment plastic food container, each compartment including a bottom and a compartment container wall, said compartment container wall having a lower portion that meets the bottom,

a thermal preservation insert for each compartment, each thermal preservation insert comprising:

a disk, the disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside

the disk,

the disk having a lower surface that conforms to a shape of the bottom of the plastic food container, and

the disk having a side that conforms to a shape of the lower portion of the container wall of the plastic food container, the disk resting on the bottom of the compartment of the plastic food container, said disk not fastened to a part of the plastic food container.

32. (previously presented) A method of preparing a plastic food container so that it can store food in a thermally controlled way, comprising:

(a) providing a plastic food container, said plastic food container including a bottom and a container wall, said plastic food container wall having a lower portion that meets the bottom,

(b) providing a thermal preservation insert, the insert comprising:

a disk, the disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside the disk,

the disk having a lower surface that conforms to a shape of the bottom of the plastic food container and having a side that conforms to a shape of the lower portion of the container wall of the plastic food container

(c) placing the thermal preservation insert inside the plastic food container so that the lower surface of the disk rests on the bottom of the plastic food container, so that the side of the disk rests snugly against the lower portion of the container wall thereby precluding food from penetrating between surfaces of the plastic food container and the disk and so that the disk is not fastened to a part of the plastic food container.

33. (canceled)

34. (previously presented) The method of claim 32, wherein providing a thermal preservation insert means providing a thermal preservation insert that has a tab on an upper surface of the disk.

35. (previously presented) The method of claim 32, wherein providing a thermal preservation insert comprising a disk means providing such an insert comprising a disk wherein an upper surface of the disk conforms to a shape of the lower surface of an identical disk for stacking purposes during storage.

36. (canceled).

37. (previously presented) The method of claim 35, wherein providing a thermal preservation insert means providing a thermal preservation insert that has a tab on an upper surface of the disk.

38. (previously presented) The combination of claim 13, wherein the thermal preservation fluid is inaccessible.

39. (previously presented) The combination of claim 14, wherein the thermal preservation fluid is inaccessible.

40. (previously presented) The combination of claim 15, wherein the thermal preservation fluid is inaccessible.

41. (new) A combination of a thermal preservation insert and a plastic food container, comprising:

a plastic food container including a bottom and a container wall, said container wall having a lower portion that meets the bottom,

a thermal preservation insert comprising:

a disk, the disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside the disk,

the disk having a lower surface that conforms to a shape of the bottom of the plastic food container, and having a side that conforms to a shape of the lower portion of the container wall of the plastic food container, the lower surface of the disk resting on the bottom of the plastic food container and the side of the disk resting snugly against the lower portion of the container wall, said disk not fastened to a part of the plastic container.

42. (new) A combination of a plastic food container with two thermal preservation inserts, comprising:

a plastic food container including a bottom and a sloping container wall, an interior space defined by said sloping container wall narrowing toward the bottom, said plastic food container having a lower portion that meets the bottom,

a first thermal preservation insert placed on the bottom of the plastic food container and

comprising:

a disk, the disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside the disk,

the disk having a lower surface that conforms to a shape of the bottom of the plastic food container and having a side that conforms to the lower portion of the sloping container wall of the plastic food container, and

a second thermal preservation insert comprising a second disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside the second disk, a side of the second disk conforming to an intermediate portion of the sloping container wall of the plastic food container when the second thermal preservation insert rests on the intermediate portion of the sloping container wall of the plastic food container,

the lower surface of the disk resting on the bottom of the plastic food container and the side of the disk resting snugly against the lower portion of the container wall, said disk not fastened to a part of the plastic container.

43. (new) A method of preparing a plastic food container so that it can store food in a thermally controlled way, comprising:

(a) providing a plastic food container, said plastic food container including a bottom and a container wall, said plastic food container wall having a lower portion that meets the bottom,

(b) providing a thermal preservation insert, the insert comprising:

a disk, the disk containing a thermal preservation fluid completely buried inside the disk,

the disk having a lower surface that conforms to a shape of the bottom of the

plastic food container and having a side that conforms to a shape of the lower portion of the container wall of the plastic food container,

(c) placing the thermal preservation insert inside the plastic food container so that the lower surface of the disk rests on the bottom of the plastic food container, so that the side of the disk rests snugly against the lower portion of the container wall and so that the disk is not fastened to a part of the plastic food container.